

Lewis & Clark Mount Hood Wilderness Proposal

U.S. Senators Ron Wyden & Gordon Smith

U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Gordon Smith are proposing the following core concepts as the foundation for bipartisan legislation aimed at providing further protections for Mount Hood and the Columbia River Gorge. These concepts will form the basis for Mount Hood legislation to be introduced on September 5, 2006 -- the first day back from the Senate's August recess.

Wilderness – In 2004, the nation celebrated the bicentennial of the Lewis & Clark expedition, along with the 40th anniversary of the Wilderness Act. While time has brought many changes along the expedition's path through the Columbia River Gorge, the natural beauty of the areas surrounding Mount Hood remains, and preserving it has only become more important. A number of areas that both Senators Wyden and Smith have found particularly worthy of protection are now being proposed as additions to the National Forest Wilderness system. Among them are many areas well known and loved by Oregonians, such as Hunchback Mountain, which provides the expansive view witnessed when driving up Highway 26. There are also hiking opportunities to see 800 year-old cedar trees and world-class kayaking in the Clackamas River Canyon. Senators Wyden and Smith propose adding over 125,000 acres of new Wilderness in the Mount Hood National Forest, an increase of almost 70% over the current acreage. Most of the proposed wilderness additions are contiguous to existing wilderness areas, so as to further enhance and protect wilderness values in the Mount Hood area. All areas proposed have been selected so as to reduce potential conflicts with other recreational uses.

These areas include:

• Hunchback Mountain	5000 acres
• Clackamas Canyon	2600 acres
• Memaloose Lake	1100 acres
• Mirror Lake	4100 acres
• Sand Canyon	1000 acres
• Sandy Additions	1000 acres
• Inch Creek	1300 acres
• Lower White River	2800 acres
• Lost Lake	1000 acres
• Larch Mountain	3800 acres
• South Fork Clackamas	2200 acres
• Twin Lakes	5400 acres
• Barlow Butte	2700 acres
• Bonnie Butte	2600 acres
• White River	2300 acres
• Badger Creek Additions	1500 acres
• Salmon River Meadows	2000 acres
• Sisi Butte	3300 acres
• Upper Big Bottom	1700 acres
• Bull of the Woods	500 acres

The Senators also propose to designate as Wilderness those areas in the Walden-Blumenauer bill, which the U.S. House of Representatives has passed, including:

- Roaring River 37,749 acres
- Eagle and Alder Creeks 4,134 acres
- Sandy River/Elk Cove/Mazama 4,672 acres
- Big Bottom 1,330 acres
- Tilly Jane 2,038 acres
- Bull of the Woods 4,717 acres
- Columbia River Gorge 22,577 acres

Mount Hood National Recreation Areas – Recognizing that a wide variety of recreational opportunities that make up the public’s enjoyment of the Columbia River Gorge, the Mount Hood area and the upper Hood River Valley, Senators Wyden and Smith propose a network of Mount Hood National Recreation Areas that include the Gumawjac Trail, Shellrock Mountain and Hellroaring Creek, along with the classic alpine aquamarine water at Boulder Lake and the stately ponderosa pines of Fifteen Mile Creek. Oregon’s newest National Recreation Areas provides permanent protections from commercial development, roadbuilding and large-scale commercial logging. It also provides mountain biking opportunities and other diverse recreation opportunities on 17,700 acres, while authorizing forest health projects where needed. These areas include:

- Fifteen Mile Creek 3500 acres
- Boulder Lake 3900 acres
- Shellrock Mountain 4700 acres
- Hellroaring Creek 3900 acres
- Twin Lakes Corridor 1700 acres

Wild and Scenic Rivers – The Mount Hood area contains some of the most pristine and beautiful rivers in Oregon. Senators Wyden and Smith propose to grant Wild and Scenic River protection to an additional 79.8 miles of Oregon rivers. Among the rivers proposed for further protection are the picturesque waterfalls and glacial outwash of the East Fork of the Hood River, and ancestral hunting and fishing grounds of Fish Creek. Over 17 miles of superb salmon and steelhead habitat on the Collowash River have also been proposed for protection. All told, the Senators propose a 47% increase to the Wild and Scenic Rivers network on Mount Hood. The additional miles of rivers to be protected include:

- East Fork Hood River 13.5 mi
- Middle Fork Hood River 3.7 mi
- Zig Zag 4.3 mi
- Eagle Creek 8.5 mi
- Fifteen Mile Creek 9.7 mi
- South Fork Roaring River 4.6 mi
- South Fork Clackamas 4.1 mi
- Collowash 17.8 mi
- Fish Creek 13.6 mi

Land Exchanges – Senators Wyden and Smith have carefully reviewed land use issues in the region and identified three land exchanges that benefit the public good. Among them is the Cooper Spur land exchange, which was the result of a consensus agreement between Mount Hood Meadows and Hood River Valley residents so that further development on Mount Hood will occur in areas that already possess the adequate infrastructure, such as Government Camp, rather than on the undeveloped northern side. The Senators will propose a mechanism for allowing this exchange to proceed in accordance with legally-required appraisal standards. As part of working to establish a fair solution to the proposed Cooper Spur land exchange, the Senators will also seek these three additional legislative protections for the public: 1) protected wetlands at the Government Camp property; 2) protected public trails at the Government Camp Property; and 3) no tax break should the appraisal find a value difference in the lands to be exchanged. Similarly, exchanges at the Port of Cascade Locks and Clackamas County will fall within this proposal.

Provisions Supporting Forest Health and Regional Transportation Initiatives – The Senators agree with the House delegation that transportation and forest health issues are vitally important in planning for the well-being of the greater Mount Hood region. They will include, as did Congressmen Greg Walden and Earl Blumenauer, provisions allowing for efforts to protect forest health, particularly on the eastside of the mountain, where drier forests are in greater danger of wildfire. Additionally, they plan to include support for regional transportation efforts and encouragement for the study and implementation of regional transportation initiatives.